

GUIDELINES FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSES IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

POSC 4005U Independent Study (formerly CDPS 4005U). Prerequisite: Fourth-year standing with a cumulative 3.7 (A-) or greater GPA. A maximum of two independent study courses may be undertaken, as long as the topics are different.

In order to be considered for the Independent Study, students must apply in the semester prior to the commencement of the study. Applications must include a letter of intent detailing the course plan and including a preliminary reading list, a suggested method of evaluation and suggested timelines for completing the project. *NOTE*: only a limited number of applicants will be admitted to the Independent Study. Consent is required from both the instructor and the dean (or dean's representative). Consult with the Academic Advising Office for application details.

An Independent Study course provides students with the opportunity to engage in an in-depth study of a specific topic within the discipline. This will involve individual reading and scholarship at an advanced level under faculty supervision. Students will conduct an extensive literature review and write a major essay/critique of the relevant literature.

Successfully completing an Independent Study project requires strong organization, time management and self-discipline. You will need to stick to the schedule that you create in order to meet all the deadlines. You should expect to spend a minimum of 3-6 hours per week on this course.

STEPS

1. Determine a focussed topic for study. This topic should be something that is not covered in existing courses. If the topic was introduced in a previous course, how will the IS go beyond or explore it more in depth?
2. Consult with a faculty member with expertise in the area you wish to study.
3. Once a faculty member has agreed to supervise you, write a brief Project Proposal and submit it with your application for an Independent Study course.

Your proposal should:

- a) identify the topic of study;
- b) provide a list of books and/or scholarly articles to read in preparation for making a detailed reading list;
- c) pose a tentative research question/thesis;
- d) identify the research method to be used; and
- e) include a tentative schedule for the completion of the research project.

Your proposal could look like a course syllabus that indicates dates for different articles/chapters/books to be read in a logical sequence, as well as deadlines and instructions for assessments (assignments). The assignments should be scaffolded so that you are building to the final essay. For example, in addition to attending weekly meetings and prepared to discuss the readings, the student will complete the following:

Week 1: Final syllabus/outline of readings and assignments (5%)

Week 2: Tentative outline of essay and thesis/argument (5%)

Week 4: Annotated Bibliography of 1st half of reading list. (20%)

Week 8: Annotated Bibliography of 2nd half of reading list (20%) and final essay outline and thesis/argument (5%)

Week 11: First draft of essay (20%)

Week 13: Final draft of essay (25%)

4. If applicable, submit a Research Ethics application form for approval of your research. This must be submitted **at least two months** before you intend to collect data. See: <http://research.uoit.ca/faculty/ethics-safety-research-conduct/research-involving-human-participants/index.php>.

5. During the first week of classes, meet with your supervisor to finalize a meeting schedule, reading list and deadlines. At this meeting, you should submit a detailed syllabus that outlines the dates for which each reading will be completed and the deadlines for assignments.

Your final syllabus should address the following:

- Proposed course title
- Description of course objectives (250-350 words)
- Grade breakdown (each assignment should be assigned a percentage)
- Description of assignments (provide as much detail as possible and specify length of different assignments)
- Reading list (including full citations)
- Tentative schedule of meetings with Faculty Supervisor
- Reasons for wanting to complete this independent study

6. Start working hard. Students are expected to devote at least 3 to 6 hours of independent work per week. (Remember that in a regular class you would be spending 3 hours per week in class, plus readings and assignments. Spending only a minimal amount of time on your coursework will show in the quality of your assignments.)

Research Ethics Approval

All research involving human or animal subjects must receive Research Ethics Board (REB) approval before proceeding. Approval requires completion and submission of the REB Application for Ethical Review. The review process can take several weeks so it is important to plan accordingly. For more information, see: <http://research.uoit.ca/faculty/ethics-safety-research-conduct/research-involving-human-participants/index.php>.